

One World Trade Center Is Now, Officially, The Tallest Building In The U.S

By **JOEL ROSE**

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST:

And I'm Robert Siegel. There was a towering decision today in the world of architecture. New York City has the tallest skyscraper in the country for the first time in almost 40 years. As NPR's Joel Rose reports, the building known as One World Trade Center is officially taking the title away from Chicago's Willis Tower.

JOEL ROSE, BYLINE: All along, the designers of One World Trade Center intended that it would be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, and today the international organization that determines such things gave its official blessing. Here's Tim Johnson, chairman of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat at a press conference in New York.

TIM JOHNSON: Our height committee reached consensus that, in fact, the building is 1776 feet in height.

ROSE: This came as no great surprise to New Yorkers who've been watching for years now as One World Trade Center slowly grew to its final height. Still, Lori Joe(ph) of Queens says the official announcement is a milestone.

LORI JOE: It kinds of brings back some of the glory we had from the Twin Towers and it's kind of like a little healing balm considering after all that happened.

ROSE: Phil McCabe(ph) and Melanie Brown(ph) of New Jersey agreed.

PHIL MCCABE: A good symbol for rebuilding in New York City and that nothing can keep us down. We've come back all the way.

MELANIE BROWN: You know, we're proud of New Yorkers and we're proud of it being done and it shows our resilience and our courage.

ROSE: The original towers of the World Trade Center were briefly the tallest buildings in the world when they opened in the early 1970s, but they were quickly eclipsed by what was then the Sears Tower in Chicago, which still has the highest occupied floor of any building in North America. But One World Trade Center is taller if you count the 400 foot spire on top of the building.

Tim Johnson with the Council on Tall Buildings says the groups 25 member height committee debated that question at a tense meeting last Friday in Chicago.

JOHNSON: It's our opinion, looking at the design, hearing from the architect and also imagining the significance of 1776, we don't believe that this spire is ever going to be removed from this building or changed from this building.

ROSE: That permanence is an important point. According to the council's rules, a spire is considered a permanent part of the building's design and it does count towards height. But Johnson says an antenna, defined as something merely functional and temporary, does not count.